VISIT…

A FRIGID DEMISE

A short adventure for four 13th-level player characters

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Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

d20 system

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INTRODUCTION

Charasta, an old white dragon, has not reached her age by being unprepared or foolish==she is, in fact, much more intelligent than most white dragons. Her lair is well defended and tailor-made to help her defend herself. Not only that, but when she leaves the caves to hunt she's taken to using *change self* to disguise her exact color. This wily white makes a perfect foe for your party adventuring in the North of Faerûn or in almost any other campaign setting as well.

PREPARATION

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), need a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual* to use this adventure. If you plan to set this cavern complex in the North of Faerûn, you'll need the new *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting*.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Unshaded boxes contain important information for you, including special instructions. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form or, where appropriate, the proper page in the *Monster Manual* is referenced.

This adventure uses one of the "Undersea Caverns" maps by Dennis Kauth from the Official D&D Website's Map-a-Week feature (Sept. 21, 2000). It's reprinted on page 2; download a full-sized version from the site at `www.wizards.com/dnd/article.asp?x=dnd/mw/archive`.

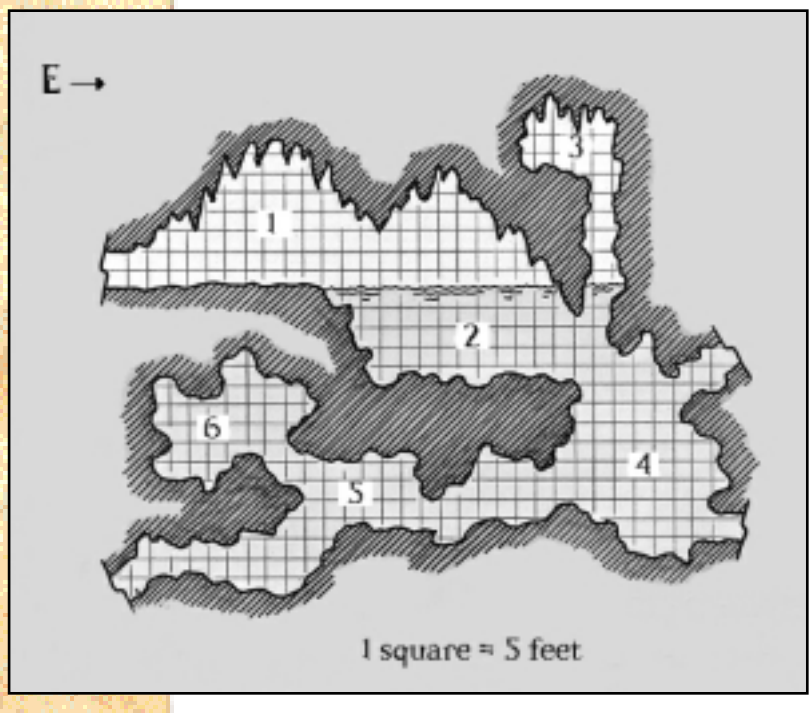
CHARACTER HOOKS

Dragon encounters are traditionally time consuming and difficult to prepare, so using A *Frigid Demise* can save you time. It is meant to be a complex encounter in a small cave system that you can insert in almost any subterranean adventure—any time the PCs are exploring an underground area near a river. Because of the *cask of cold* (a magic item the dragon uses to keep her lair at 32 to 33 degrees Fahrenheit), there's no need to use this encounter in an arctic area—even a tropical area would work (and really surprise the PCs). Or, Charasta can be the climax of a longer dungeon-style adventure that you are planning. You could even run A *Frigid Demise* all by itself as a dragon-hunt adventure.

Use the following hooks and rumors to foreshadow the encounter when the PCs enter the region of the lair.

- A dragon—reports vary as to its size and color—lives and hunts in the area. Although the whole subject is kept quiet, local nobles will pay a bounty of 5,000 gp for its head.

- A lot of the caves in the region are flooded due to a powerful underground stream (the river helped carve out the caves in the first place).
- Over the last few years, the weather has become a little colder throughout the region.
- An ancient box was lost in the region almost 300 years ago. Many said it could change the season from summer to winter.



CAVE FEATURES

The layout of the cave complex—and the fact that most of it lies underwater—makes for extremely difficult maneuvering. In fact, a party not equipped with at least some of the following spells is going to be in trouble: *fly, water breathing, protection from elements, ethereal jaunt, teleport or dimension door, passwall, disintegrate* or *free action*.

The Freezing Water

Characters in the water with some sort of magical cold resistance (*endure, resist* or *protection from elements*) and free action can operate in the water normally, except that range increments for ranged weapons and visibility ranges are halved. Characters either have to hold their breath or use *water breathing* to stay under. Any character can hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to twice her Constitution score. After this period, the character must make a Constitution check (DC 10) every round in order to continue holding her breath. Each round, the DC increases by 1.

When the character finally fails her Constitution check, she begins to drown. In the first round, she falls unconscious (0 hp). The following round, she drops to –1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, she drowns.

Characters with no free action or magical cold resistance suffer the following penalties:

- Characters must make a successful Swim check (DC 12) each round to move (see the *Player's Handbook* p. 74, do not forget penalties for encumbrance). In combat, the DC becomes 17.
- Characters make attack rolls, Reflex saving throws, and skill checks requiring movement (Open Locks, Move Silently, etc.) with a –4 penalty. Range increments for ranged weapons and visibility ranges are halved, and such attacks suffer an additional –2 penalty.
- Characters must make Fortitude saves once per 10 minutes, taking 1d6 points of subdual damage on each failed save. A character who sustains any subdual damage from cold suffers from frostbite or hypothermia (treat her as fatigued—she cannot run or charge and suffers an effective penalty of –2 to Strength and Dexterity). These penalties end when the character recovers the subdual damage she took from the cold and exposure.

Characters with free action but no magical cold resistance suffer the following penalties:

- Characters make attack rolls, Reflex saving throws and skill checks requiring movement (open locks, move silently, etc.) with a –2 penalty. Range increments for ranged weapons and visibility ranges are halved, and such attacks suffer an additional –2 penalty.
- Characters must make Fortitude saves once per 10 minutes, taking 1d6 points of subdual damage on each failed save. A character who sustains any subdual damage from cold suffers from frostbite or hypothermia (treat her as fatigued— she cannot run or charge and suffers an effective penalty of –2 to Strength and Dexterity). These penalties end when the character recovers the subdual damage she received due to cold and exposure.

Characters with magical cold resistance but no free action suffer the following penalites:

- Characters must make a successful Swim check (DC 10) each round to move (see the *Player's Handbook* p. 74, do not forget penalties for encumbrance). In combat, the DC becomes 15.

- Characters make attack rolls, Reflex saving throws, and skill checks requiring movement (Open Locks, Move Silently, etc.) with a –2 penalty. Range increments for ranged weapons and visibility ranges are halved and such attacks suffer an additional –2 penalty.

LAYOUT OF THE CAVES

Note that the map is a side view, showing a cross-section of the different cavern levels. Each encounter area description mentions the approximate width of the cave. The passage into Area 1 leads from the surface through a winding maze of caverns and tunnels (or any other obstacles you want to place before this encounter). The passages away from Areas 4 and 5 lead to a wide underground river and eventually to the surface. Charasta uses these latter three as escape tunnels.

Area 1: Entrance to the Lair

Read or paraphrase this text to PCs entering the cave.

> A mammoth cave, 30 feet wide, stretches ahead and high above. The far end of the cave is full of water: a large pool of unknown depth that takes up the entire width of the cavern. A stalactite-covered ceiling rises 40 feet above. The air is frigid—so cold, it's almost painful.

An *alarm* spell, cast at the entrance of this cave from the west, silently alerts Charasta of intruders. She has attempted to make this cave look l;ike a dead-end cavern with a pool, and nothing more.

Charasta's Tactics. If Charasta is alerted by the *alarm* spell, she uses *clairvoyance/clairaudience* to look into the cave at the intruders. If it looks as though they will enter the water, she rushes to this cave by means of the pool through Area 2. Peeking up through the surface, she attempts to gain a single surprise attack (either a grab attack—dragging a non-air breather into the water—or a use of her breath weapon), then retreat into the water. Hopefully, she thinks, this will drive off intruders. If not, she will fight them underwater.

Area 2: Frozen Corpses

As the party enters the next chamber, read the following:

> Under the near-frozen surface, below the floating chunks of ice, the 20-foot-deep pool is lined with ice along its walls and floor. Dark shapes are frozen within this ice.

Charasta's Actions

Charasta is in Area 6 at the beginning of the encounter. She moves around a lot, remaining mobile to keep away from her foes while leading them deeper into her lair. (Because the party could encounter her in one of several different areas, her CR is not included in the calculation of each encounter's EL.)

She hopes the watery environment will hinder attackers and that her various barriers, traps, and guardians can defeat them or drive them off. Thus, she fights alongside the water elementals in Area 4 until they are gone or she is hurt, and then pulls back to Area 5 with the stone golem there (and some healing potions), behind the *wall of force*.

Assume that Charasta has cast *mage armor* and *bull's strength* (rolling a 3) on herself, making her AC 35 and adding +2 to her attack and damage rolls. Before entering combat, she will cast *shield* and *resist elements* (fire). Her scrolls are all written on waterproof parchment (which costs 5 gp more than normal per scroll).

As one tactic, if hard pressed, Charasta makes her way back into Area 1 and takes to the air, fighting foes from above. Her ultimate defense is to *teleport* to Area 7 and hope the intruders never figure out how to follow.

Charasta stores her kills here, frozen into the pool's walls and floor until she needs them. A great deal of work (requiring hours) could free the corpses of these humans, dwarves, orcs, and various Medium-sized monsters. However, they have no treasure (Charasta already looted them).

Area 3: Hidden Cave (EL 5)

The next cavern rests at the top of a tall shaft.

> A long shaft rises up out of the water into the ceiling of this cave. The sides of the shaft glisten; jagged shards of wet ice coat every surface.
>
> At the top of the shaft lies a cave coated with ice. The ceiling is thick with particularly large stalactites.

The walls of the shaft are coated with ice, so the Climb DC is 30. Further, a character touching any of the surfaces including the floor, walls, and ceiling in the hidden cave, must make a Reflex save (DC 20) or slip due to the slickness of the ice.

Trap. Unless the PCs locate a hidden stone lever at the bottom of the shaft (DC 30 to do so) and pull it down,

the stalactites immediately above the shaft in the cave are rigged to fall when anything passes 20 feet above the surface of the water. Anyone struck by these falling stones while climbing must make an immediate Climb check with a –4 penalty or fall.

Falling Stalactites: CR 5; Falling mass of rocks (10d6); Reflex save halves damage (DC 15); Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 24).

Treasure. Within the largest stalactite that remains held fast to the cave ceiling is a secret compartment (DC 28 to find) that is locked (DC 30 to open—the key can be found in Area 7). Within this compartment, Charasta keeps a special treasure: a white diamond worth 5,000 gp, which the dragon's mother gave her from her own hoard.

Charasta's Tactics. Charasta can appear here in a smaller form. She does not come here when threatened and, in fact, will *teleport* away rather than be cornered in the hidden cave.

Area 4: Guardian Cave (EL 10)

Read the following description as the characters enter the next cave.

> This underwater, ice-coated cave deep within the complex measures 50 feet wide and almost 60 feet tall. The water here churns slightly, perhaps due to a current coming through one or both of the eastern exits.

Creatures. Four Large water elementals dwell in this cave. Charasta brought them here with *lesser planar binding* spells on scrolls. They use their water mastery and vortex abilities to great effect as they fight to the death to keep intruders from passing through this cave.

Large water elementals (4): hp 60, 65, 71, 79; (*MM* 84)

Charasta's Tactics. Charasta retreats from Areas 1 or 2 to this cave so the elementals can fight alongside her. If threatened with death, she uses one of the exit tunnels to get to the river and the surface. Otherwise, if the elementals area slain, she *teleports* to Area 5.

Ad Hoc XP Adjustment: Award an additional 25% experience point award for overcoming the elementals, due to the difficulty of fighting them in this environment.

Area 5: One Last Guardian (EL 12)

A *wall of force* seals this tunnel off from a continuing passage at its lowest point. Charasta uses her *teleport bracer* to get past it when she needs to.

> Through the frigid water, this 20-foot-wide tunnel leads west. At its end it splits, one path angling upward, the other down. The current seems to pull toward the passage leading down. Weapons of all types are frozen into the sides of the tunnel, like embedded trophies.

Creatures. An ice-covered stone golem waits in the passage to Area 6. Its duty is to keep intruders away from the *cask of cold* Charasta keeps there. If anyone other than Charasta even enters this tunnel, it begins to use its *slow* ability on them.

Stone golem: hp 77; (*MM* 108)

Treasure. Aside from a number of mundane melee weapons, a masterwork greatsword, a masterwork dwarven urgrosh, and a masterwork rapier are embedded in the ice. Further, Charasta has hidden five *potions of cure serious wounds* in the ice (DC 20 to find each one).

Charasta's Tactics. Charasta retreats from Area 4 to this cave, drinking the potions (if need be) while her opponents figure out how to get past the wall of force. If followed, she tries to maneuver opponents to where the stone golem can attack.

Ad Hoc XP Adjustment: Award an additional 25% experience point award for overcoming the golem, due to the difficulty of fighting it in this environment.

Area 6: *The Cask of Cold*

This section describes a source of the dragon's magic.

> Strange carvings decorate the uneven, ice-covered walls of this 40-foot-wide, dead-end cavern. Nary a flat surface can be found among the rock and ice slabs, although the back of the cave sports an alcove only 5 feet wide and tall. Within it rests a small metal box, its lid open wide. It appears to be empty.

The box is the *cask of cold*, the magic item that keeps the area in this encounter at just around 32 to 33 degrees Fahrenheit. If anyone closes it, the water will slowly warm to its natural temperature (varies based on the setting), and the ice will slowly melt. This may take more than 48 hours, depending on the climate.

If someone who speaks draconic studies the carvings closely (or if a *comprehend languages* is used), it becomes clear that they represent an elaborate plan for the cave system. The characters learn of the existence of Area 3's hidden cave as well as a huge cavern about 100 feet straight to the west (Area 7).

Trap. The cask is magically trapped so that any warm-blooded creature that comes within 20 feet of it must make a Reflex saving throw (DC 22) or freeze solid. Creatures failing their saving throw suffer 3d6 points of cold damage and freeze immediately. While frozen, the creatures remain alive but can take no actions of any sort. Further, they become encased in a mass of ice that extends 2 feet away from their bodies. This ice forces the frozen creature to sink to the bottom of the cave. A successful Reflex saving throw (DC 22) makes the character immune to the effect of the trap. Closing the box dispels the trap permanently.

Finally, 20 points of fire damage to a frozen character frees him from the ice (but he suffers the fire damage).

Freezing Trap: CR 6; 3d6 damage plus frozen solid; Reflex save avoids (DC 22); Search (DC 30); Disable Device (DC 30).

Area 7: Charasta's Real Lair (EL 8)

The area described below does not appear on the map.

> Perfectly round, this cavern extends 150 across and 100 feet high. It is filled with ice and frost. Six warriors in armor stand in a circle in the middle of the cave, surrounding what appears to be 30-foot-wide mound of treasure.

In this chamber Charasta sleeps and keeps her hoard. The warriors are dead humans frozen solid, their armor and weapons of normal quality (and poor condition due to age). Charasta uses them for decoration, sleeping in the center of the pile.

Trap. There is a locked chest (DC 30 to open) at the center of the mound of treasure. A trap on the lock fires three poisoned needles at anyone opening it without using the key. The key to the chest is buried under all the coins (Search DC 32 to find). Further, if the key is not turned left, then right, then left in the lock before opening, the chest emits a blast of sonic energy that does not harm objects but greatly disrupts living tissue.

Poisoned Needle Trap: CR 6; three +15 ranged (1 point of damage) plus poison (2d6 Str/2d6 Str); Fort save resists (DC 19); Search (DC 26); Disable Device (DC 25).

Sonic Blast Trap: CR 6; 12d6 sonic damage in 20 feet; Reflex save (DC 19) for half damage; Search (DC 31); Disable Device (DC 31).

Treasure. The mound of treasure consists of 3,890 gp, 22,345 sp, 45,987 cp, a roll of cloth with gold weave (worth 150 gp), a silver platter (worth 75 gp), a carved wooden harp (worth 300 gp), a large, rolled-up tapestry (worth 350 gp), and a pair of bronze chalices of great workmanship (worth 350 gp each). All of this surrounds a chest (see trap, above). Inside the chest lies the key to the secret compartment in the stalactite in Area 3, a *rod of wonder*, a *chime of opening*, and scrolls of *suggestion*, *locate object*, and *identify*.

Charasta's Tactics. Charasta climbs to the roof and uses her breath weapon against foes from above, dropping down to crush them if she can (using her wings to slow her descent so she suffers no damage). If intruders have made it all the way here, she defends her hoard to the death.

THE DRAGON

Charasta, old white dragon: CR 14; Huge dragon (cold); HD 24d12+120; hp 281; Init +4; Spd 60 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor), swim 60 ft., burrow 30 ft.; AC 31 (touch 8, flat-footed 31); Atk +31 melee (2d8+9, bite), +30 melee (2d6+4, 2 claws), +29 melee (1d8+4, 2 wings), +29 melee (2d6+13, tail slap); Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.; SA Breath weapon, crush, fog cloud, gust of wind, freezing fog, SQ Damage reduction 10/+1, SR 21, cold subtype, immunities, icewalking, blindsight, keen senses; AL CE; SV Fort +19, Ref +14, Will +16; Str 29, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +26, Concentration +29, Escape Artist +24, Hide +24, Listen +26, Search +26, Sense Motive +26, Spellcraft +26, Spot +26; Cleave, Hover, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch, Weapon Focus (claws).

Breath Weapon (Su): A white dragon has a 50 ft. *cone of cold* breath weapon that inflicts 8d6 points of damage with a Reflex save (DC 27) for half damage.

Crush (Ex): When flying, Charasta can land on opponents as a standard action, using her whole body to crush them. Crush attacks are effective only against those of Small size or less (though she can attempt normal overrun or grapple attacks against larger opponents).

A crush attack affects as many creatures as can fit under the dragon's body. Creatures in the affected area must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 27) or be pinned, each automatically suffering 2d8+13 points of bludgeoning damage during the next round unless the dragon moves off them. If the dragon chooses to maintain the pin, treat it as a normal grapple attack. Pinned opponents take crush damage each round if they don't escape.

Cold Subtype (Ex): Cold immunity, double damage from fire except on a successful save.

Icewalking (Ex): This ability works just like the *spider climb* spell, but the surfaces the dragon climbs must be icy. It is always in effect.

***Freezing Fog* (Sp)**: The dragon can use this ability three times per day. It is similar to a *solid fog* spell but also causes a rime of slippery ice to form on any surface the fog touches, creating the effect of a *grease* spell (DC 13). The dragon is immune to the *grease* effect because of her icewalking ability.

***Gust of Wind* (Sp):** The dragon can use this ability three times per day (DC 15).

***Fog Cloud* (Sp):** The dragon can use this ability three times per day.

Frightful Presence (Ex): Charasta can unsettle foes with her mere presence. The ability takes effect automatically whenever the dragon attacks, charges, or flies overhead. Creatures within a radius of 240 feet are subject to the effect if they have fewer HD than the dragon.

A potentially affected creature that succeeds at a Will save (DC 24) remains immune to that dragon's frightful presence for one day. On a failure, creatures with 4 HD or fewer become panicked for 4d6 rounds, and those with 5 HD or more become shaken for 4d6 rounds.

Immunities (Ex): All dragons are immune to *sleep* and *paralysis* effects.

Blindsight (Ex): A dragon can ascertain creatures by nonvisual means (mostly hearing and scent, but also by noticing vibration and other environmental clues) with a range of 240 feet.

Keen Senses (Ex): Charasta sees four times as well as a human in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light. She also has darkvision with a range of 800 feet.

Possessions: bracer of dimension door, three scrolls of *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, a scroll of *dispel magic*, and a scroll of *true strike*

Spells Known (6/7/5; base DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*flare, ghost sound, mage hand, mending, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*alarm, change self, mage armor, shield*; 2nd—*resist elements, bull's strength.*

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Bracer of Dimension Door: This normal-appearing bronze bracer allows the wearer to cast *dimension door* three times per day, upon command.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *dimension door*; *Market Price:* 30,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb.

Cask of Cold: When a characters opens this box and speaks a command word, the cask lowers the temperature of the area 200 feet around it, as an emanation, to 32 to 33 degrees Fahrenheit.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *sleet storm*; *Market Price:* 4,000 gp; *Weight:* 10 lbs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Monte Cook started working professionally in the game industry in 1988. In the employ of Iron Crown Enterprises, he worked with the *Rolemaster* and *Champions*games as an editor, developer, and designer.

In 1994 Monte came to work at TSR as a game designer. As a senior game designer with Wizards of the Coast, he codesigned the new edition of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and authored the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. His next release is *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil*.

A graduate of the Clarion West writer's workshop, Monte has also published short stories and two novels. In his spare time, he runs anywhere from one to three games per week, holds a yearly game convention at his house, builds vast dioramas out of LEGO building bricks, and reads a lot of comics.

Monte designed the May 2001 adventure, *Tower of Deception*, for the Official D&D Website. To read more of his recent d20 work, visit his home page at www.montecook.com.